

STRAP frequently asked questions

Eligible Applicants

Can a private, non-profit agency serving a County and the surrounding area apply?

STRAP is open to any local public body so your agency would not be able to apply directly. You would need to work with a city, village, township, or county to put together a project proposal with them as the sponsor/applicant.

What is the definition of 'eligible applicant'? Eligible applicant means local public bodies or federally recognized Indian tribal governing bodies, but does not include private transportation providers.

What is the definition of 'local public body'? Local public body means counties, cities, villages and towns and agencies thereof. "Agencies thereof" must provide documentation establishing their relationship (e.g. formal action or resolution) to any of the above entities.

Definition of 'Rural Area'

Are communities within a census-designated urbanized area eligible for this program? An urbanized area may be an applicant for a project with two thirds of its' service outside of the urbanized area. These funds may only be used for service in "areas other than urbanized" areas. By federal definition, "areas other than urbanized" include small urban and rural areas. "Small urban area" includes cities and villages with populations of less than 49,999.

Will services that originate from a metropolitan area to a rural area qualify for funding under the program or does the service need to be completely rural? The STRAP program will consider funding rural service that originates from an urban area. Eligible rural service or new rural systems funded under STRAP will be defined as a system or service where at least two-thirds of the revenue miles are within the boundaries of a rural area.

Can an urban area apply for STRAP? Yes. Proposed project needs to meet STRAP requirements.

Funding

Are there any limits on the amount of money that STRAP will provide? Yes, planning grants are limited to \$20,000 in federal monies. Planning grant requests that exceed \$20,000 in federal monies will be considered and awarded at the department's discretion and may be funded with other funding sources. There are no limits on grant requests for service projects. Amounts awarded will be based on the results of the competitive process, project merit and availability of funds.

Can STRAP funds be used to purchase capital? No. STRAP funds can only be used to lease capital (vehicles, equipment and facilities).

The application references as not funding "Specialized transit projects, where service is provided exclusively for a subgroup of the general public or for specific purposes, other than required ADA service." However service to people with mobility impairments is specifically mentioned in the notice as being a priority. Would this mean that a potential voucher project to people with disabilities would be unacceptable? How about if it's for everyone but has income guidelines?

STRAP is for public transportation. And while one of the emphasis areas of STRAP is serving the needs of non-ambulatory customers, the service or program itself must be made equally available to all members of the public.

This funding is for one year. Will additional funds be available for following years to sustain a project? STRAP is authorized by Congress through 2009 (\$2 million per year). Funding is dependent on congressional allocations each year. Continuing projects will need to reapply for each year of funding. Continuing projects showing successful results should compete well for funding.

Matching Funds

Can state dollars be used for the match? Non- US DOT dollars may be used as match. No specific state dollars are being programmed as part of STRAP.

Does match money need to be local tax levy? No, any funds except US DOT federal transportation funds may be used as match. Some examples of sources for local share that may be used for any or all of the local match include local appropriations, other non-DOT Federal funds, dedicated tax revenues, private donations, revenue from human service contracts, and net income generated from advertising and concessions. Non-cash share (e.g. volunteer services or other in-kind contributions) is eligible to be counted toward the local match as long as the value of each is documented and supported, represents a cost that would otherwise be eligible under the program, and is included in the net project costs in the project budget.

What does all government entities must provide financial support mean? Any public bodies that receive service and lie outside of the applicant local public body's boundaries, must provide financial support for the project (a local share contribution). For example, if a municipality applies for STRAP and a portion of the service serves a neighboring community, then the neighboring community must contribute something toward the local share. If a County applies for STRAP, all service within the County is covered by the County's local share and there is no need for financial support from individual communities within the County.

Can we use the following for in-kind match - TCC committee member time used to assist Mobility Manager with planning; office space, equipment use, long distance phone calls, internet connection etc.? The costs covered by another source of non-USDOT funding related to office space, equipment and supplies would potentially qualify as match provided they are adequately documented and are eligible expenses associated with the provision of public transportation service proposed for this program.

Could the County's grant writer's time and other planning committee member's time be used as in-kind local match for the STRAP program? No, none of these resources would qualify as in-kind. Trans. 6 is used as a policy guide for this program and it states that "payments to members of advisory committees, transit commissions or transit boards" are not eligible grant expenses. Eligible expenses include "those transportation and overhead expenses associated with the provision of public transportation service."

Therefore expenses that are outside of the provision of service, e.g. application development, are not considered eligible project expenses and cannot be used as in-kind local match. A good example of eligible in-kind would be a volunteer driver's time once the service is initiated.

Other WisDOT Programs

Is STRAP available to agencies that receive 85.21 or 5310 monies? Yes, but proposed projects must provide public transportation.

We are currently applying for continued Section 5311 grants for a shared-ride taxi service. Is this in addition to or replacing? STRAP is separate from the existing Shared Ride grant program but could be used to expand the Shared Ride service from the existing service area to a larger rural area.

If an applicant applies for funding under several programs (i.e., Section 5311 grant, Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program grant), is there an oversight process to ensure duplication of service or funding? Since STRAP is a competitive grant program, should applicants proposing new service submit applications under Section 5311 and STRAP? It definitely makes sense to apply for 5311 operating assistance for your current service. There is no guarantee for funding of additional service through either the 5311(c) or STRAP competitive processes. While it is ultimately your decision as to whether or not to apply, WisDOT will use data available to track existing grants to ensure duplication does not occur. Applicants may apply for grants from different programs for the same project. However, there are slight variance in each programs application cycle that may make this process difficult for the applicant.

Public Notice

Can we just hold a public hearing instead of giving notice that a hearing will be held on request and then scheduling a hearing if requested? Yes, having a public hearing is permitted without a specific request for the hearing. Notice of hearing should be at least 10 days.

Is a public hearing required? Other programs require the public notice to appear at least 10 days in advance of the hearing. Does this apply to the STRAP grant also? Applicants are required to publish a notice that offers the public the opportunity to request a hearing. A sample public notice is listed in the application. If nobody requests a hearing, then the notice is sufficient. The only requirement is that the application should document that the public notice requirement has been met (include a copy of the published notice). If a hearing is requested, it is reasonable to accommodate the request within 10 business days, but there is no rule covering STRAP regarding this topic.

The STRAP application says proof of Public Notice is "for transit service projects only". Does this mean that I do not have to have a public hearing for this grant because we are writing it as a planning grant? Public notice is not required for planning grant applications.

General

Who developed the Wisconsin program and when? How long has it been in development? The STRAP program concept was developed by WisDOT during the last reauthorization process (SAFETEA LU) circa 2003-04. The first year of program funds were officially released to WisDOT in February 2006.

How do I apply for STRAP? The application is located on the WisDOT website at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/transit/strap.htm>. For more information, contact Becky Soderholm, STRAP Program Manager at becky.Soderholm@dot.state.wi.us or via phone 608-266-1650.